



ASLEF

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JOURNAL
OCTOBER 2010



ON TRACK IN MANCHESTER

TUC



12 CONFERENCE: TUC met
in the old Central Station

6 LUL: News roundup
from the capital

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Crossing the boundaries ...

I MAKE no apologies for returning to the subject of level crossings – because every month reveals some new evidence of incompetence, complacency or sheer lunacy.

Last month we hit a new low. The findings of a report from the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) into last September's fatal accident at Halkirk level crossing in Caithness contained this chilling line: 'Network Rail did not properly understand the risk at Halkirk crossing and had not taken the previous accident record into account'.

This amounts to irresponsibility verging on the criminal, and ignorance bordering on the insane. How can anyone associated with the industry fail to recognise the risks involved at level crossings, where one person a month has died for decades? What kind of managers fail to take previous safety failures into account?

Network Rail must react to this damning assessment by the RAIB. I don't constantly demand dismissals and resignations, but we can't tolerate managers who don't understand risks at an unmanned crossing. The simple facts are that crossings kill and unmanned ones kill regularly. What is there not to understand?

The deaths at Halkirk inevitably led to another sickening episode of the ugly game of 'Pass the Parcel of Blame'. There is always some excuse dragged out. Poor eyesight of the car driver. Lack of attention by the person crossing the track. Tiredness that caused a car to veer off the road.

It is all sham. We know that level crossings kill, so if we were serious we'd begin the obvious and only solutions: building tunnels, erecting bridges and introducing in-cab technology to enable a driver to look further up the track than the eye can see. They are all available. But no one will put up the money to stop the carnage.

What I can't understand is how others manage to remain so detached, complacent and unconcerned as the carnage continues.

Keith Norman
General Secretary



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📠 020 7794 6406 📧 journal@aslef.org.uk 🌐 www.aslef.org.uk

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**More than
just a union**

Union backs charges for lorry road users

THE union, as part of the Freight on Rail campaign, is arguing for the introduction of a lorry road user charging system. We believe such a system could

- address the inequalities between UK and non-UK hauliers in international and domestic traffic
- help to raise HGV operating standards
- remove unfair competition
- avoid undercutting and illegality
- provide incentives and funding for training
- improve conditions for drivers away from base
- improve road safety
- improve efficiency of road

freight to minimise external costs such as local air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, noise and congestion

- encourage modal shift where appropriate so that rail freight is not undercut for long distance freight traffic
- Similar schemes already operate in Germany and Switzerland and their experience shows that the efficiency of the HGV sector has improved with less empty running, that funding has been provided which has supported improvements in working conditions and has increased the use of long distance rail freight.

Travel facilities raised at NXEA

THE Driver Company Council at National Express East Anglia (NXEA) has received a response from the company on our claim to extend travel facilities. 'What they have said is no great surprise,' says DCC secretary Steve Wright, 'but at least we have a formal statement of their position.'

The company said it could only participate if ATOC were to accept an agreement industry wide and all TOC's participated, despite the DCC arguing that we couldn't see why this was such a hang-up for TOCs, given that the cost is marginal. We accepted there would be restrictions - as was always the case even in BR days. Management are adamant, however, that it is not within their gift as they could not even buy the resource to travel on other TOCs.

The position is that NXEA will not move without full ATOC approval, which means it would have to be acceptable to all participating TOCs.

'The resistance to this claim is utterly inexplicable,' says general secretary Keith Norman. 'It would cost the companies nothing and be an enormous benefit to our members. Let all the TOCs be warned - this is not going to go away.'



GERMAN NON-STOP TRAIN ON THE WAY

A German high-speed train will arrive at St Pancras International for the first time on 19 October on a dry run for a direct rail service between London and Frankfurt. The 200 mph Deutsche Bahn Inter City Express (ICE) train will face a host of safety checks before the service starts at the end of 2013

Newsinbrief

○ TRANSPORT WORKERS SUPPORT FRENCH PENSION STRIKE



French unions last month launched a second 24-hour strike protesting over plans by Sarkozy's government to raise the legal age of retirement to 62 by 2018 and the full pension retirement age from 65 to 67.

In the first wave of protest strikes between 1.1 and 2.7 million demonstrators (depending who you believe!) marched through French cities.

Transport unions were heavily involved with fewer than half the lines on the Paris Metro (underground) working and half the scheduled long-haul trains cancelled.

○ BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION AT HEAD OFFICE

The union's black and ethnic (BEM) Representative Committee is inviting all members to a reception to celebrate Black History Month on Friday 22 October from 1330.

It will be held in the ballroom at Arkwright Road and feature speakers from Show Racism the Red Card and Reg Davies who will speak on the history of the ethnic minority community in the railway industry. Aaron Clapp from district 6 will also be premiering the film he has been working on called 'Tracks Back to the Past'.

If you are intending to come, please advise Lee James at ljames@aslef.org.uk or ring her at head office.

○ ASLEF BACK TAXES OVER £400K

The firm that we use to provide tax code assessments tell us that in total they have now recovered £413,926 for ASLEF members, with the average amount being £216.94. We insert details of the company in the Journal from time to time. They are PTS and the address is Labyrinth House, 43-47 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, Cheshire SK1 3DG.

○ CROSS PARTY SUPPORT FOR FREIGHT EDM



An Early Day Motion (EDM) in Parliament supporting rail freight is being backed by MPs from right across the political spectrum. So far MPs from the Labour Party (including Julie Hilling and Graeme Morrice), Plaid Cymru

(Ellyn Llwyd), the Conservatives (Peter Bottomley), Liberal Democrats (Bob Russell), Democratic Unionists (David Simpson) and the Social Democratic and Labour Party (Alasdair McDonnell) have backed EDM 719 which was tabled by Liberal Democrat MP Julian Huppert.

The motion reads, 'That this House recognises the importance of rail freight in the economy of the country, in reducing road congestion and in providing safe, low carbon transport choices for British businesses; and therefore calls on the Government to spend limited resources in the greenest way possible and support the development of rail freight through network upgrades on major routes, including to ports, through targeted grants to help reduce road congestion, pollution and exposure to road accidents and through a supportive planning regime for rail freight terminals that recognises their strategic importance.'

Wobbling Javelins modified

MODIFICATIONS have been made to the high-speed trains running from London to Kent after passengers complained of 'wobbles' as the Javelins passed through tunnels.

Southeastern said the UK's fastest domestic trains, made



by Hitachi, had been suffering 'sideways movement' – never a plus for a train!

The 29 six-carriage trains cost a total of £258 million – nearly £30 million each – and feature prominently in travel plans for the London 2012 Olympics.

'The problem has been remedied by adding dampeners to the bogies, but this whole incident proves again how far behind the UK lags in terms of high-speed rail,' says ASLEF

general secretary Keith Norman. 'We have so little experience of it in this country.'

He pointed out that while the UK has 113 km of high speed track this compares rather poorly with other European countries where

- Spain has 3,823 km
- France has 2,106 km
- Germany has 1,663 km and
- Italy has 923.

Further afield, China boasts 10,225 km of high-speed track and Japan has 3,042.



NEW ROLE FOR PHILIPPA

AT THE forthcoming 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi, India, Southern Driver Philippa Roles will be making history as the first Welsh female athlete to compete in four Commonwealth Games.

Philippa has been one of the UK's top throwers in recent times, and is one of the most medalled athletes at National championships ever.

She is also a double Olympian, having competed at both the Athens and Beijing Games. She is looking to make it a hat trick of Olympic appearances in London 2012.

Margaret Lynes, who coaches Philippa, says, 'I think she deserves all the help she can get, particularly holding down a full time driving job and trying to train as a full time athlete as well!'

Attracting rail passengers: how not to do it

THREE stories that emerged last month prove, according to ASLEF general secretary Keith Norman, that 'customer care' in many rail companies is more of a joke than a provision. 'When rail was privatised and franchising introduced, one excuse was that the private sector would be 'much more responsive to customer needs'. That notion has now firmly been laid to rest.

○ Southern has decided to run an old fleet of 313s to 'improve capacity' along the hour-and-a-half Portsmouth to Brighton line – despite the fact that they do not have toilet facilities. Rail watchdog Passenger Focus understated its case when it branded the decision 'a blow' for the elderly, people with medical conditions and those travelling with children. 'It's not a



313 in Southern livery at Brighton Station

blow – it's a deterrent to taking the train,' said Keith. 'And its sole aim is to squeeze more revenue.'

Due to be introduced in December, Southern say the new trains will have a 'refreshed interior' including new seats and flooring. 'How long will they stay pristine if there are no loos on the train?' demanded the ASLEF general secretary.

○ Meanwhile a couple had to pay a £114 fine after getting off a train two stops early! Emma Clark and Davyd Winter-Bates were travelling to Southampton from London with South

West Trains when they decided to get off two stops early at Eastleigh. They were each fined £57 for failing to stay on the train!

○ And CrossCountry has been fined by the Department of Transport for not implementing Wifi on its services. This was a specific commitment in their franchise and a date had been agreed, but the company failed to meet it.

'At least it seems like some form of equality,' Keith Norman says. 'Rail companies are as dismissive about business passengers as they are about private travellers!'

Stansted not-quite-so express!

POSTERS advertising the Stansted Express have been banned by a watchdog for implying the train would reach central London in 35 minutes. The posters claimed 'Train to London 35 minutes' – whereas the journey to Liverpool Street takes 45 minutes.

It takes 35 minutes to Tottenham Hale – but few people (bar Spurs supporters!) consider Tottenham to be the centre of London.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ruled that the advert was 'likely to mislead passengers' and National Express East Anglia have begun changing them.

Companynews

○ COMPANY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

- Bro. J. E. Ball, Salford: CrossCountry Company Council Representative – Birmingham Constituency
- Bro A Castle, Bristol Branch: First Great Western (HSS) Company Council Representative – Constituency 1

○ REST DAY WORKING

ASLEF is prepared to sanction Rest Day Working on

- First Capital Connect until 27 November
- Chiltern Railway until 25 December
- Hull Trains until 25 December
- DB Schenker until 30 October
- London Midland until 30 October
- NX East Anglia until 24 September 2011
- Virgin West Coast until 25 December

Work until you drop – it's your choice!

THE government plans to phase out the UK's default retirement age from this month. It is a double-edged sword. The TUC welcomed the move because it gives workers over 65 protection against arbitrary dismissal – but it effectively means people will work until they drop. Work and Pensions Secretary Ian Duncan Smith has already said 'people will need to work longer'.

Trying to portray this as an issue of choice and a positive benefit because people don't really want to retire at 65, is nonsense. It only becomes a choice if - like the Directors of the top 100 companies - we also can retire on an average of £220,000 per year, usually from age 60. For the majority of us, a tenth of that will be good. Most working people have to slim down their life-style after retirement..

Raising of the age when we will receive a State Pension to 66 from 2016 will force many to stay

on at work – and right-wing think tanks have proposed that it should rise to 70. Who gains? The government, of course. It saves £13 billion for each year they raise the age of the state pension – which is why the changes are taking place.

To most people the state pension is an important part of their income (even though the UK state pension is among the lowest in Europe). Ian Duncan Smith has some front to say, as he did, 'Britain used to have a pensions system to be proud of... the value of the State Pension has been eroded, leaving millions in poverty'. He is from the same Thatcher government that removed the link in pension increase from wages. The government now only wants pensions to increase by CPI and not RPI - which would have meant over the last twenty years your State Pension would be 14% less.

It's also interesting to examine



how many people reach retirement age - and how long pensioners live. A Labour force survey recently showed that 53% of 64 year old men are economically inactive. Workers doing shifts or manual jobs probably make up the majority of these. (The figures for women can't be used because at the moment they can claim State Pension at this age). The intensity of working today takes its toll on the body. Using the ONS figures, life expectancy at 65 in Glasgow, 78.8 in Kensington and Chelsea it is 87.7.

Working people can't afford to

put thousands into pensions, and, by doing shifts and manual work, they die younger. New technology throughout the decades has increased intensity of work, cut thousands of jobs, and made billions of pounds for companies. Yet in 2010 the average weekly hours are 45 - and now after 100 years of the State Pension we are heading back to it being 70 before you get a State Pension. We must expose the pension scandal and fight for a decent pension for all.

● **Andy Viner is standing for the Pension Consultative Committee for TFL**



UNDERGROUND NEWS ROUND-UP

- provided by **Andy Viner and Finn Brennan**

OLYMPICS - NOT CIVIL DUTIES!

Management has finally told us something officially at Trains Council about their plans for the Olympics, though with a health warning that plans may change. For the period of the games - 27 July to 12 August 2012 - they want our special duties to include;

- Trains running until to 2:30 am

which mean late turns not finishing until 3:00.

- An additional 300 running turns above the level currently rostered.
- On those lines serving the main Games venues (Central, Jubilee and District) an additional 'peak' service level to carry passengers returning from the Games in the late evening.
- Four weeks of



special duty sheets with the service being ramped up more for the second weeks once the athletics starts.

Negotiations about how this can be achieved will take

place in the autumn. No doubt we will be told it is our civic duty to throw our working conditions away. But while the Olympics are a great sporting event, they are also very big business. Millions in profits will be made by property developers, TV companies and advertising agencies. The rest of us will be paying higher taxes for years to come for it all.

It's only fair that those who deliver the public services that make this event possible are properly rewarded for our work.

● CARING AND SHARING?

Your ASLEF Trains Council reps complained about letters sent to drivers who have been sick just a short while, which effectively said, 'Sorry to hear you're not well - but if you don't come to work we will look at getting rid of you.'

LUL has agreed that this was 'over zealous' on the part of their managers and accept that mentioning redeployment on first contact after you are sick is not appropriate.

● MORE TRAINING CUTS?

Having cut block training from five to three days, management now wants to cut the amount of training that newly qualified drivers will receive. They also want drivers to be able to retain their competencies using simulators rather than real train driving experience.

Members on the Jubilee line have forced management to increase the amount of practical training they receive in ATP mode by refusing to operate when not fully confident to do so. Practical training on the new S stock is also completely inadequate.

LUL are clearly cutting training to save money; exposing their hypocrisy about wanting to be 'world class'. ASLEF will fight for the proper training needed by professional train drivers

● '30 SECOND' PA ANNOUNCEMENTS

We have again complained about management's ridiculous obsession with public address announcements being made within 30 seconds of a train stopping. In some cases this has led to drivers being hauled in and questioned for being as little as seven seconds late in making a PA!

We asked management to show a bit of common sense and they have agreed they would. We will however believe it when we see it!



Threat to displace drivers

IN recent years LUL recruited large numbers of new drivers to cover line upgrade training and service enhancements. Now as the impact of the government cuts start to bite they have frozen recruitment. The number of drivers leaving the grade has also dropped as promotion opportunities have dried up and fewer are leaving for outside jobs.

The ASLEF Trains Council reps anticipated this situation. It was obvious well over a year ago that major cutbacks were on the way. That is why we insisted on minimum staffing numbers for each depot - including minimum pool, annual leave and spare coverage ratios - in the agreement we made in August 2009.

Now that some of the Upgrade training has been done on the Victoria and Metropolitan lines, management are claiming that they have surplus drivers in some locations while others are aiming to reducing towards minimum numbers. As LUL will not recruit any more drivers for at least the next two years they threatened to displace so-called 'surplus drivers' to depots without waiting lists. We were able to demonstrate that all current vacancies could be filled under existing agreements and, for now at least, have prevented any drivers being displaced off line.

While we are prepared to discuss any staffing problems that arise, the agreements that we have made to protect train drivers must be honoured. Management cannot be allowed to pick and choose which they will abide by.

Rickmansworth stand firm

ASLEF members at Rickmansworth have taken two days of solid strike action in a dispute over the breakdown in industrial relations at the depot. They had voted by a magnificent 10 to 1 to take action.

Although the downgrading of a colleague was the immediate spark for the dispute, it was not the only reason why members were 100% solid on 21 July and 11 August. A management culture of arrogantly

ignoring drivers concerns had developed; reports of a manager claiming 'he didn't care what happened because he was getting two hundred grand severance' only inflamed matters further.

Management tried to hide the success of the strikes by introducing an emergency timetable and claiming to run a good service based on a reduced service. But no amount of propaganda could hide the truth.

Ricky drivers have had enough of being ignored!

A number of meetings have now taken place to deal both with the underlying issues and the individual case at the centre of the dispute. Progress has been made and a report will be put to the Executive Committee. But one thing is sure, Rickmansworth ASLEF branch have set a fine example of discipline and solidarity



◉ REMOTE BOOKING ON AND OFF DISPUTES.

The facility to book drivers on and off away from our home depots was introduced in the early 90's when a number of depots were closed. ASLEF has always opposed this. It is simply not fair that some drivers are forced to travel up to an extra hour and half per week in their own time. Following a dispute in 2001 it was agreed that minimum facilities would be provided at remote locations. Where they were not provided drivers would be entitled to a penalty payment of 15 minutes per shift when they remotely booked on or off.

At Arnos Grove and Neasden management now intends to stop making these payments. They have also continued to book East Finchley drivers on and off at High Barnet since the new depot opened. In each case we believe that they are in breach of agreements and the branches concerned have asked to be balloted for action to end this outdated practice and ensure that every driver is treated fairly.

◉ ROLE OF INSTRUCTOR OPERATORS

LUL want to fundamentally change the role of Instructor Operators so that they carry out the Competence Assurance assessments currently done by DMT's. This could mean that someone you do a changeover with today could be sneaking onto your train tomorrow to do an unannounced assessment of your driving technique and PA's. Management want the best of all worlds, done on the cheap - while at the same time they say any Instructor Operators who don't meet the present standard for Instructor Operators would not be entitled to protection of earnings under Competence Management. They have suggested splitting the grade.

There poses all manner of unanswered questions and principles and as it involves the transfer of work between grades we have asked for it to be discussed at Company Council level.



Organising across borders ...

WE ARE all used to describing ourselves as railway or transport workers - but the majority of ASLEF members don't work for railway companies. They are employed by huge multinational entities with interests ranging from transport, school services, rubbish collection, financial services to sewage all across the world.

With huge global corporate interests at stake these companies are well organised as they seek to maximise their profits and break organised labour.

That is why trade unions also have to organise as a global network to effectively resist co-ordinated attacks on our wages, conditions and livelihoods.

We are affiliated to the ITF which has a long and proud history of working with transport unions to fight attacks on, and exploitation of, transport workers across the world. That's why I was proud to lead ASLEF's delegation to the 2010 ITF Congress in Mexico City.

Simon Weller, **National Organiser**



ASLEF delegates at the recent ITF conference (left to right) John Hay, Simon Weller and Marz Colombini

What is the International Transport Federation?

MARZ COLOMBINI of the ASLEF national executive committee explains why the ITF was formed, what it is and how it operates ...

Founded in London in 1896 by European seafarers' and dockers' union leaders who recognised the need to organise internationally against strike breakers, the International Transport Workers Federation has developed into a global federation of transport workers trade unions

representing 759 unions with over 4,600,000 members in 155 countries. The railways section brings together 144 unions worldwide - including ASLEF - and represents in excess of 1,200,000 members.

The ITF aims to

- promote respect for trade union and human rights worldwide

- work for peace based on social justice and economic progress
- help its affiliated unions defend the interests of their members

- provide research and information services to its affiliates
 - provide general assistance to transport workers in difficulty
- Its activities to achieve these objectives involve
- representation on employment, safety and conditions
 - information on global developments and
 - practical solidarity from protests, demonstrations and political pressure, to direct industrial action.

WHO OWNS WHAT?

One of the ITF's primary concerns is the effects of globalisation on transport, particularly

privatisation and the increased concentration of ownership of international transport companies.

For example, Govia, which operates three UK rail franchises (Southern, Southeastern and London Midland) is part-owned by the Go Ahead Group, a UK transport management services company operating primarily in the rail and bus sectors, and Keolis a European transport operator with over 200 subsidiaries which is established in seven European countries.

The German national railway company Deutsche Bahn runs over 500 subsidiaries. As well as its various interests across mainland Europe, the company operates the UK's largest freight company, DB Schenker Rail UK. Deutsche Bahn has also recently taken control of Arriva plc - and consequently now operates Arriva Trains Wales and Cross Country services in addition to numerous bus companies throughout Europe.

The Stagecoach Group runs the SWT and EMT franchises and holds a 49% stake in Virgin Trains. Its interests also include Sheffield Supertram and Manchester Metrolink along with numerous bus companies in the UK and North America.

National Express Group operates bus, coach, tram and rail



ASLEF's Simon Weller is one of the ITF's three lay auditors (seen here with Andy Bain, President of TSSA)



(right) Pete Dodgson, Wendy Hurst,



Marz Colombini at the Mexico Congress. 'The ITF is increasingly relevant and important'

services in the UK, the US, Canada, Spain, Portugal and Morocco as well as long-distance coach routes across Europe.

MIRROR THE MASTERS

The probability is that as an ASLEF member you will ultimately be employed by a company holding interests in multiple sectors of the transport industry across several countries – and it's a trend that will develop. That's why transport unions need to mirror the employers and organise globally.

Our union affiliated to the ITF over 90 years ago, and we continue to play an active role. We not only help make policy at the 4-yearly Congresses, we also contribute regularly through the Railway Workers and Urban Transport Sections.

Setting the union agenda for world-wide transport

THE first key issue addressed by the 2010 ITF conference was climate change. Delegates set out a new policy which addresses climate change, calls for the development of sustainable transport measures and underlines the need for democratic control of the economy.

It was interesting to note that rail only contributes 2% of carbon emissions from the transport industry as a whole. The compelling argument was that if we do nothing and average temperatures increase by 2% over the next 50 years the consequences will be irreversible.

The conference also resolved to oppose unemployment and fight against the undermining of transport workers' wages and conditions, calling for an in-depth study on the impact of climate change policies on transport employment.

This provoked a lively debate, but was not a simple rubber-stamp exercise. Robert Scardelletti from the US-based Transportation Communications International Union expressed concerns at the effect that this policy could have on his members, who are primarily employed in the movement of coal.

Although the fears were not dismissed, the conference opposed the move on the grounds that new jobs would be created in a 'green' economy.

ORGANISATION

The conference called for closer cooperation between transport unions, including forming and strengthening national coordination committees. This proved contentious because the original motion favoured unification and mergers of unions. ASLEF was not alone in its opposition to this principle, and the conference amended this to calling on the ITF to 'play an active role with affiliates to encourage unity and maximise coordination between transport unions at national level'.

It was also significant that delegates laid down a programme of increased activity for young people in the ITF, including establishing an ITF

Young Workers committee. It reflected the fact that our young members are our union's future.

CALL FOR WORLD-WIDE MINIMUM STANDARDS

Perhaps predictably resolutions were adopted condemning the negative effects of liberalisation and terrorist attacks on transport. There were also calls for globally-accepted trade union rights including solidarity actions in support of those denied them. Specifically the congress focussed on the need to reverse judgements of the European Court of Justice, which have attacked the most fundamental trade union rights, and called for the provisions in the European Convention on Human Rights to be binding on the Court.

The ITF is also to campaign for permanent minimum standards for unprotected workers, contract workers, and those working for labour agencies.

Delegates called for increased investment in improved transport infrastructures for both freight and passenger operations and honed in on safety aspects. There were appeals to all governments to improve safety monitoring, safety standards and worker

rehabilitation and all employers to develop preventive policies to reduce health risks.

JUSTICE ACROSS THE GLOBE

Other issues tackled during the week included

- calls for the ITF and all its affiliated unions to actively support the Palestinian people and extend humanitarian support to the people of Gaza, whilst recognising Israel's rights
- acknowledgement of the advances in democracy and social progress in Venezuela – and support for that country's right to determine its future free from foreign interference.
- support for Mexican unions and especially for women workers in that country, including a demand to the Mexican President that basic worker and gender rights be respected.
- combating the global crisis in capitalism by insisting on measures to boost the economy which would put people first – including restructuring the banking sector, and taking transport, housing, social provision and energy under public control.

ASLEF delegates Pete Dodgson and John Hay

Women making a difference



AT the women's conference of the ITF, I spoke in support of a motion calling for 'the rejection of all forms of violence, femicide, and violation of human rights, and support for the labour unions of the workers in Mexico'.

During my speech I highlighted a woman's right to choose, as abortion is gradually being criminalized in Mexico. This can be seen as a further suppression of women throughout the country. Other speakers made reference to the horrifying rate of femicide, as well as open discrimination of women workers.

We also approved an ITF statement supporting Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, an Iranian who faces execution by stoning for adultery. We also learned of the plight of a trainee seafarer cadet Akhona Geveza who simply disappeared one night. It was agreed to use her story to promote the campaign 'Say No to Violence against Women'.

Other issues we discussed included maternity, family, childcare, threats to flexible working rights, sexual harassment, violence against women, inappropriate uniforms, low pay, HIV/AIDS and unfair retirement ages for women. I'd like to record my pleasure at being one of the lucky delegates at the Women's conference to have the full support of their delegation.

ASLEF delegate, Wendy Hurst



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Applying medical fitness standards will keep drivers and passengers safe

says **Nick Silk** of the union's Colchester branch

HOW many more drivers will lose their livelihoods because of TOC's disregarding or hiding behind get-out clauses in Railway Group Standards?

RGS's are in place to provide a safe railway - or so you might think. RGS's use words like 'must', 'will' and 'shall' - but when a TOC disregards one of these standards it can always find another that allows it to hide behind other railway undertakings. This allows hypocritical managers to let drivers work when they may not be fit to do so.

As you read this, drivers are in the cab who are taking medication that may cause sleepiness or lapses in concentration. The RGS for medical fitness for train drivers says we 'must not' drive trains whilst taking such medication, but if after seeking medical advice it is deemed safe to do so, it is allowed. This is hypocritical and unsafe.

If a driver tested positive for alcohol, they'd lose their job. And if they said they may be fit for work, they wouldn't be allowed to drive - because alcohol affects concentration.

99.9% of railway incidents are caused because of lapses in concentration. So why

do the RSSB and TOCs allow drivers to work whilst taking medication that may cause such lapses?

A colleague of mine was recently taking medication with these side effects, but was returned to duty because the occupational health provider advised that if he had not had side effects after seven days he would be safe to work. He was still taking the medication when he was involved in an incident, and removed from the grade. Concentration played a major part in the incident, but the TOC would not take the medication into consideration. Instead the company used the RGS and hid behind the other railway undertaking - in this case the view of the occupational health provider BUPA.

ASLEF should advise members not to drive trains while taking any medication that can cause lapses in concentration until the course of tablets has been completed. And we shouldn't forget that some drugs may also have withdrawal effects after finishing a course of tablets.

If any driver has had an incident in the past, big or small, when on some kind of medication, I would like to hear from you so I can formulate some statistics and hopefully prevent another driver being removed from the grade. You can contact me on nick_silk59@hotmail.co.uk

Don't let Con-Dems backtrack on rail



urges **Sadiq Khan**, MP for Tooting and former Labour transport minister

PRIOR to the General Election, when I was a transport minister, Labour set out major plans for the future of rail in Britain. We proposed major electrification schemes, and embarked on rolling stock procurement programmes, improving the passenger experience and contributing to sustainable growth. We set out long term plans for the strategic rail freight network, to deliver more and better interchanges and terminals and 24 hour, year round capability. And our long term plans for high speed rail demonstrated the unprecedented scale of our ambition. All of these projects would contribute to Britain's low carbon economic objectives, while creating and sustaining thousands of jobs directly and indirectly.

In opposition, I will continue to back investment in rail as one of the best ways to secure economic recovery and a return to stability.

Yet from the Beeching cuts of the 1960s to the botched privatisation of British Rail in the 90s, successive Tory governments have been guilty of ideologically motivated attacks on rail. I fear that today, in their haste to cut the deficit, another Tory-led government will put the brakes on at a time of growth and ambition for Britain's railways. Recent reports about possible Coalition plans to scale back Labour's spending programme and to lift the cap on regulated fare increases, are a source of great concern. People will not pay more for less - and if we see big rises in fares alongside cuts to investment in new capacity and a better passenger experience, then the risk is that many of those who chose to move from road to rail in recent years could go back to their cars.

I know how hard train drivers work to keep Britain moving. That is why I want all ASLEF members to know that I'll be working hard as well - to make sure that the gains we made in recent years are not lost to austerity or lack of ambition; that rail is never seen as an easy target for cuts; and that the hard working men and women who make our railways what they are get a fair deal.



ASLEF rails against the cuts

THE Newton Heath branch organised a fringe meeting to discuss how government cuts could affect transport. They invited Central Manchester MP Tony Lloyd and Hugh Lanning of the public service union PCS, as well as ASLEF president Alan Donnelly.

'It's appropriate that this discussion should take place in Manchester - the birthplace of the railways,' said branch chair Andy Hourigan. Rail arrived in Newton Heath in the 1840s.

'I don't believe we need cuts,' he declared. 'We need investment in areas like housing that will boost the economy and be of lasting worth to the country.' He



Newton Heath branch secretary Dave Vaughan and Chair Andy Hourigan listen to Manchester Central MP Tony Lloyd

also declared that the government should concentrate more on corporate tax avoidance

than hounding claimants. These were themes that recurred time and time again as the branch guests spoke.

ALAN: BACK TO OUR ROOTS



ASLEF president Alan Donnelly took up this theme, arguing, 'This is a good time to bring working people back to trade unionism and to Labour. We need to start organising again, from our roots. That way, the next time we have a Labour government, it will reflect what we want.'

Alan reminded the meeting of the success of the campaign against Margaret Thatcher's poll tax. 'We won that argument because we persuaded ordinary people that it was unjust and we involved people from outside our unions and our structures'

'We have to win people back to unions, recruiting wherever we are, even going outside our own unions. This is the key.'

After a lively session of questions and answers, thanks and congratulations were showered on the branch for organising an event which left those who attended more informed, more confident – and more determined than ever not to accept cuts in public services without resistance.

TONY LLOYD: 'END THE SCAPEGOATING'



TONY LLOYD, chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party and of its trade union group, said, 'George Osborne and his friends say that those out of work are parasites. This is not true. They must not be allowed to scapegoat the poorest in our society.'

Tony declared that whenever costs were arbitrarily cut, safety suffered. 'The Thatcher agenda led directly to disasters at Kings Cross, the Herald of Free Enterprise and Potters Bar. Cuts lead not only to eroded services, but to deaths.'

Tony argued that rather than cuts, this should be a time for boosting and revitalising the economy with initiatives such as electrifying rail. 'It would improve rail for the future, generate jobs and wealth and create more employment.'

HUGH LANNING: COLLECT THE TAXES FROM THE RICH



HUGH LANNING, the No 2 in the Public Services Union, congratulated the Newton Heath branch on organising the fringe because 'local community and industrial organisation is the key to the fight to resisting government cuts'. 'We must win the arguments with ordinary members,' he declared. 'And we can – because cuts at this time are economic madness.'

He believed the solution was to stimulate the economy, not retract it. Hugh said the injustice was that the people who caused the crisis were still picking up their bonuses - while the innocent were losing their jobs and their rights.

He also stressed that the rich must be made to pay their taxes. 'My union's members who deal with this every day believe there is something like £28 billion in unpaid taxes.'

ASLEF made its usual positive contribution to this year's TUC conference in Manchester, with formal speeches on transport policy, interesting contributions to fringe meetings – and a hearty approach to social events in the evenings!

'It's no use complaining that the TUC doesn't deliver everything we feel it should,' says Simon Weller, standing in as delegation leader because Keith Norman was recovering from heart surgery. 'Our job as affiliates is to make the TUC deliver what we want. It will play an important part in safeguarding working people from the worst effects of the proposed government cuts.'

These were some of the ASLEF activities during the week....

TUC SHORTS

MORNING GUV'NER



MERVYN KING, the governor of the Bank of England, was the main speaker at the TUC conference, and was very much to be commended for his remarkable. 'We – the financial sector – have let you down, and let your members,' he declared.

'The crisis came out of the financial sector and we are angry – but anger will not produce change.

The solutions and the way back to growth will be different for poor to rich countries, and a radical reform of the system is happening again. He said it was wrong that banks were bailed out because they know the public purse will bail them out.

WHEN THE INNOCENT GO FREE ...

ONE interesting fringe meeting that ASLEF dele-
gated to was the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation (MOJO),
which met people before and after their release. It was the
'Birmingham Six', innocent Irishmen accused of
the Birmingham pub bombings. Although completely innocent, Paddy spent 17

'When guilty people leave jail they are given Paddy said. 'Yet when innocent people are released they get a gradual taste of freedom, no psychological counselling, no help to depression, often to drug or alcohol abuse and



Billy 'The Shall Not Pass' Baxter!

BILLY'S T
AT TUC!

WHO is the
TUC? Nati
Alan Don
based Me
every dele
door of th

'I volunteered because the TUC was interested in me if I'd done it. I was doing it, so I was time.

Incident
bottle of c



The ASLEF delegation to the 2010 TUC Congress – Alan Donnelly, Simon Weller, John Evans and Simon Birtwistle

Bank of England was an unusual guest
what he had to say was perhaps equally
r and policy makers – let it slip – not

and our members are entitled to be

ere, he said, action on capital flow from
e financial sector to prevent this
makers should feel they can take risks
em out.

gates went along to was organised by
, a charity that aims to help innocent
brain-child of Paddy Hill, one of the
planting bombs in that Midlands town.
years in jail.

all kinds of assistance and support,
sed, they are given nothing – no
nselling. Many cannot cope and it leads
nd even to premature death.'

THE BEST KNOWN ASLEF PERSON

he best known ASLEF member at the
onal Organiser Simon Weller? President
nelly? No, it's probably Southport-
rseryrail driver Billy Baxter. Because
egate and visitor has seen him at the
e conference hall for the last two years.
ntered to check credentials when the
n Liverpool last year, and they asked
o it again,' Billy says. 'I enjoy myself
o I agreed to come to Manchester this

ntally, Billy also won second prize - a
hampagne - in the RMT raffle!



Simon Weller: 'We can take a leading role.'

Defending Trade Unions

SIMON WELLER told the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions that the proposed cuts in public services was an opportunity for trade unions to take a leading role in organising public resistance, and thus not only doing something worthwhile, but also enhancing their own relevance and importance. But that, he insisted, means re-establishing relationships with local communities.

TUC DEBATES TRANSPORT

AN ORDERED AND PUBLICLY OWNED NETWORK



John Evans at podium

JOHN EVANS told TUC delegates that ever since privatisation, no one was sure who actually runs the railways. Was it the government, the regulators, the private rail companies or none of the above? We had reached the state where some rail workers are no longer sure who they work for.

Transport was too important to be left to such a lottery, which is why ASLEF calls for an ordered, publicly owned and controlled network.

Whoever does run our railways, it is not the government, John declared, despite the £5 million paid out in subsidies each year. There was nothing it could do, for example about huge bonuses paid to senior managers in the private companies, even ministers claimed not to approve of them.

Franchise firms can't lose,' John declared. 'They are even entitled to compensation if we take industrial action. Even if there's no service, they still make money!'

John also said that ASLEF supported UK train building, which would be a positive step in this time of economic crisis.

The conference voted unanimously in favour of the motion, with support coming from the TSSA and the RMT.

RMT's Alex Gordon called the transport system 'an expensive mess which was going to get worse', condemning in particular the 'rural buses' cabal of extortionists'. TSSA's Gerry Doherty concentrated on fares, declaring, 'Cheap fares sound good - but we know that in some cases by the time they are advertised there are none left!'

Further backing came from the Unite union and the sea-farers union Nautilus.

MORE FREIGHT ON RAIL



Simon Birtwistle at rostrum

ASLEF delegate Simon Birtwistle, beginning his speech calling for firm strategies to encourage and expand freight on rail, went for the sympathy vote by saying this was his first conference – and when he concluded the Congress chairman said it had been worth waiting for! Delegates seemed to

agree as they overwhelmingly voted in favour.

Simon said the benefits of rail freight are clear. Firstly there are the obvious environmental benefits - per tonne carried, rail produces 70% less carbon dioxide than road transport, and the largest freight trains in the UK can remove up to 160 HGV journeys from our roads.

In terms of safety, Simon stressed that HGVs are over 3 times more likely to be involved in fatal accidents than cars due to their size, a lack of proper enforcement of drivers hours and vehicle overloading. Police say HGVs are involved in 9% of fatal collisions although they make up only 3% of traffic.

'While ASLEF believes in a transmodal freight network, there can be no doubt that for reasons of safety, economics and the environment, the bulk of freight journeys must be by rail,' he declared.

HANDS UP FOR CUBA!

Daryl Pawson, ASLEF's Health and Safety Rep at Harrogate, says he was pleased to be 'told by his partner' that he was going to Cuba for his summer holiday - but it started him wondering why a sunny bright Caribbean island needed a solidarity campaign - and what affiliation achieved. Here he shares what he discovered on his Caribbean journey ...

IT WAS only after my partner announced that we were going to Cuba this summer that I recalled having voted to renew my branch's affiliation to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC). During weeks before we left I started to ask myself why we needed to give support to a country that's offering me white sand beaches and an unlimited amount of locally produced alcohol? Very strange, I thought.

So, with help from Arkwright Road, I contacted Rob Miller at the UK Campaign office to explain what I wanted. As a result I suddenly started receiving emails from Cuba offering a meeting in Havana to outline what our help and support means to the Cuban people.

I thought a quick meeting in Havana wouldn't unduly upset the enjoyment of my holiday and I was having ten nights in a beach resort and four nights in the Cuban capital.



Havana's 'busy but very elegant' railway station

From Harrogate to Havana - Daryl and partner Jacky at the Cuban Institute for Friendship



Yes! There really are classic American Chevys and Buicks!

So last May, after a day's delay at Gatwick while a replacement was found for our defective Russian-built airliner, 200 of us set off for Cuba. Two-thirds of the passengers spoke English and the rest were Spanish-speaking Cubans - so it obviously made sense to hire a plane with a crew that only spoke Portuguese! We arrived at the Cuban city of Holguin after a ten-hour flight brightened by entertaining exchanges over misunderstood drinks.

I don't know what I expected in this country shunned by its superpower neighbour - the USA was a mere 60 miles from where we stood - but it wasn't Holguin's large modern airport with fully-stocked bars and lines of new Korean hire cars shining in the afternoon. As we were led to a gleaming air-conditioned coach I wondered where the old Russian cars were? Or the classic American Chevys and

often supervised by traffic inspectors (called 'amarillos' due to their yellowish uniforms) who stop blue-plated government-operated cars to place passengers in them. Large trucks pick them up, too, and have doors cut in the side and benches in the back operate for this purpose.

I'd hoped to get an insight into Cuba's railway system but there was little track near our resort.

There is a real problem getting replacement parts - as we discovered when a local bus broke down outside our bedroom window at eight o'clock one morning. We watched a mechanic work throughout the scorching day. There was no option of towing it back for maintenance. Instead, a pipe was run from the hotel swimming pool to the bus radiator!

CAPITAL EXPERIENCE

After a great ten days in the east we took an internal flight to Havana. I'd studied every TV program I could find on Havana, but this is a land of surprises. With its ¾ million population it is much busier than we'd expected - and I finally got to see those 50s American cars, supplemented with Russian Ladas and Vaz.

Transport in Havana reflects the whole Cuban situation. Buses are mainly from Russia or gifts from other countries - because of the US trade embargo that began in earnest in 1962. The US says its embargo will remain until the Cuban government moves towards 'democratisation and greater respect for human rights'. The Cubans simply call it the blockade.

It means that goods and materials have to be imported from countries not directly under the US influence - but just to confuse the issue, the US is reported to be the fifth largest exporter to Cuba! But many buses have been donated by other countries or solidarity groups. The Dutch have donated over 1,500 decommissioned vehicles, so you sometimes see buses in the orange colours of Amsterdam, often with the phone number to ring if you want to buy an Amsterdam city travel ticket!

“ TRANSPORT IS CLEARLY A PROBLEM - BUT EVERY CUBAN PROBLEM HAS A SOLUTION ”

Buicks?

But it all changed once we left the airport. Russian cars? American cars? There were hardly any cars at all! Instead I saw a tractor towing a trailer full of passengers, donkeys and eastern European trucks. People sat in front of small houses to avoid the temperature - no air-conditioning for the masses here. To add to the surreal atmosphere, large vultures circled constantly.

ON THE DUSTY ROAD

Transport is clearly a problem - but every Cuban problem has a solution. The few rural buses are always fully loaded so every main road junction has large numbers of people awaiting lifts from passing vehicles. They are

One of Cuba's must-see buildings is Havana's busy but very elegant railway station. It's strange that to get to the railway station you have to walk past a perfect replica of the Washington White House - except this one has Ladas parked outside.

FRIENDSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE

I was lucky that Rob in the UK had arranged for me to meet Maria in the impressive 'Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples' where she works. Formed in December 1960, this organisation aims to promote 'in all possible ways the relationships of friendship towards Cuba' with people in countries throughout the world. They have branches abroad to create understanding, friendship and solidarity for the Cuban cause and people, and arrange visits and working holidays for supporters.

Maria spoke about the severe effects of the US embargo on the country at every level, explaining the difficulties in obtaining foreign currency through exports because other trading partners had to obey the US restrictions. Her husband was working in Bolivia providing free medical aid but Maria said this medical knowledge could be a great revenue stream but for the blockade.

We discussed the importance of solidarity organisations like the CSC and its trade union affiliates. She said how it encouraged the Cuban people to believe 'We can do it with your help' and hoped it would lead to further improvements in agriculture, education and health care. She added, however, that health care and education were significantly better than in many countries - something we had witnessed for ourselves. As we left, she said, 'See what Cuba has achieved even with a 50 year blockade - and imagine what we could have achieved without it!'



Two sides of Cuba – the modern resort at Guardalavaca ... is mirrored in this overview of the capital, Havana. 'We were so glad we took the two hotels deal and got to see both sides of the country!'

I feel privileged to have met so many friendly people during our two weeks in Cuba, and I hope we understood correctly their aspirations and hopes. Some of the comments we heard surprised us, but the most impressive message was 'We're in this together.'

I'd like to think that ASLEF's affiliation to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign helps with life on the island. Since my return there does appear to be some easing in political relations between Cuba and the US, and I hope this will improve.

One thing I can say for sure - next time my branch votes to renew the affiliation to the CSC - my hand will be first up.



The bustle and romance of the crumbling old town of Havana

WHAT THE UNION WAS DOING 100 AND 50 YEARS AGO

100 years ago 'rail motor cars' were in the news, while 50 years ago the latest Railway Queen was crowned ...

100 YEARS AGO

In the October 1910 Journal Organising Secretary H. Parfitt railed against a gent who tried an unconventional way of stopping a 'rail motor car' ...

"On September 5th I went to Brierley Hill to meet one of our Stourbridge members. He was attending the Police Court in connection with the case of a man who tried to stop a rail motor car by placing himself across the rails. He got the worst of it and was knocked between the rails; he would have been killed, but our member was keeping a good look out and had reduced speed considerably when the collision occurred.

This living stop-block was taken to the Workhouse Infirmary for a few weeks. But the police were waiting for him and they brought

him before the magistrates; those gentlemen tried to get some of his relatives to undertake to look after him, but none of them "were having any", they "had had some" before. So the poor wretch was remanded for a week; probably he will be better off "inside" - BOTH "insides."

50 YEARS AGO

The Railways Queen's inauguration in Manchester was a hot topic in ASLEF's October 1960 Locomotive Journal ...

"On Saturday, 10th September, in glorious weather, Miss Sheila Riordan of London was crowned Britain's Railway Queen at Belle Vue Gardens, Manchester, and before a crowd of over 20,000 people.

The ceremony was performed by the Joint

Presidents, Sir Reginald Wilson, Chairman of the London Midland Area Board of British Transport Commission, and Mr.W.J.P. Webber, General Secretary of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association, and was accompanied by events that lasted from midday until midnight. These included the Children's Ballet "The Glass Slipper", Dance Troupes Competitions (with over 1,000 Dancers), a football match between the boys of the Derby and Woking Railway Orphanages (won by Woking), a Girls' Relay Race by the girls of the two Homes (also won by Woking), a Gents' One Mile Inter-Region invitation scratch race (won by T.R. Billington, L.M.), a Ladies' 100 yds. Inter-Region invitation race (won by Miss M.Zeraschi, L.M.R.), and a Speedway Race for the Railway Queen's Silver Trophy."

○ Extracts selected and edited by Jane Pimlott

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NORTH EAST LONDON'S DOUBLE LOSS

PETER MORRISON has passed away aged 77. Peter began his railway career at Kings Cross before transferring to Enfield Town Depot and on the closure of Enfield Town saw out the rest of his career until retirement at Bishop's Stortford.

Peter succumbed to multiple sclerosis in May and his funeral took place at Hoddesdon Cemetery on the 17 June. Our thoughts are with Peter's family at this time of great sadness.

It is also my sad duty to report that Peter Goodey has passed away at the age of 83 following a long illness. Peter enjoyed a long association with the railway. He was the last of the Wood Street depot steam

drivers to be based here at Chingford.

Peter was elected to the Branch Committee when Chingford Branch opened in 1976, held the position of Assistant Branch Secretary for 10 years and regularly attended Chingford Branch meetings until he retired in 1992.

In retirement Peter conquered his fear of flying and took regular trips to Spain as well as Canada and the United States.

Peter's funeral took place on the 1 September with a service at the North Weald Methodist Church and cremation at Parndon Crematorium. Peter's family are in our thoughts at this sad time.

Steve Jestico, Sec, Chingford branch

BRIAN CONNELLY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

IT IS with great sadness that I inform you of the death of a great friend and colleague Brian Connelly (affectionately known as Big Brian) who was taken from us at the young age of 44 on 20 August 2010 following a courageous 20 month battle with cancer.

He was forced to retire on medical grounds at the end of 2009 but he refused to let his illness get in the way of his family life and carried on as normal, even signing himself out of the hospice for an evening to attend a friend's 50th birthday party; this was typical of Brian.

He started on the railway in 1986 as a Second Man at

Polmadie, transferring to Selhurst in 1988 to attain a Driver's position and in the same year transferring to Yoker as a Driver. He transferred from Yoker after nearly 19 years to Glasgow, Queen Street in 2007.

Brian and his family were overwhelmed with the national branch collection and the generosity and support shown by his colleagues.

He was popular and well respected by all who worked with him. He was a great family man who loved socialising, golf with a passion and Glasgow Celtic.

His popularity was reaffirmed by the huge attendance at his funeral. Special thanks to Driver James Samson (Queen Street) who played a lament on the



bagpipes at the funeral and graveside; Brian would have been proud.

Brian leaves behind his wife Jane and children Greg, Zoe and Matthew.

Brian will be remembered by his colleagues as one of life's true gentlemen.

Gavin Slicer, Glasgow

ALBERT ('AL') WRIGHT SOCIABLE DRIVER DAD

IT IS with great sadness that I pass on the news of the death of my father, Albert Wright, after a short battle with cancer.

Formerly of Waterloo Nine Elms, Basingstoke and Woking, my father was an ASLEF supporter if not a political one.

In his 46 year railway career, from steam to mixed traction, the camaraderie that was apparent and the friends he made ensured long and enjoyable employment with the railway. As a boy I never heard him complain about having to go to work at 3 o'clock in the morning or 10 o'clock at night.

He participated in and loved all social occasions, from playing football for the Nine Elms football team, to playing cards for the Basingstoke Whist team. His joke telling, stories and songs were legendary and kept many a trip alive on the way home from far afield. After retiring in 1997 his zest for life continued. Dad was always ready for a party and to meet up with old colleagues.

He will be deeply missed by his wife Janet, his daughter and son in law, Lynne and Martin, me and my wife, Paula, and his granddaughters Georgia, Charlotte and Frankie.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all colleagues and friends for their support at this sad time.

Derek Wright, Driver, Basingstoke

D. A. JONES 'DAI BOTH ENDS'

IT IS with great sadness that I have to report the untimely death of recently retired member D. A. Jones, affectionately known as 'Dai Both Ends' - a reference to his previous role as guard/train manager. Dai was a fully paid up member of the 'Jolly Boys' a long time before his official retirement, and would always arrange his diary to make sure of his attendance at their monthly gatherings.

At the request of the family this group of retired drivers paid tribute to Dai by wearing their Jolly Boys emblazoned shirts and forming a guard of honour for Dai's last journey.

Dai will be sadly missed by all friends and colleagues, a fact reflected by the numbers attending his funeral.

Our thoughts are with Jan, Angela and David, who is a driver for FGW at Swansea.

Brian Jones, Secretary, Swansea High Street branch

KEVIN DOWDESWELL WELL LIKED, ONLY 49

SHOEBURNESS driver Kevin Dowdeswell was only 49 when he succumbed to cancer earlier this year. He began his career in 1979 at Ripple Lane as a second man and worked on the railways for 31 years. When he passed away he had been a Driving Instructor on C2C for 15 years.

Kevin was highly respected and well thought of by all the staff at the depot. As a mark of our respect, we clubbed together and put up a memorial bench outside the depot. We will think of Kevin as we rest there a while in the summer.

Our thoughts are with Theresa, his wife and daughter Sarah at this terrible time. **Paul Clark, health and safety rep, Shoeburyness**

H. J. BISHOP FORMER HARTLEPOOL MAYOR

RETIRED driver H. J. Bishop - known as John - died aged 82 on 11 July after a short illness.

Formerly a driver at Hartlepool and Thornaby depots, John served as chairman of both the LDC and ASLEF branch at Hartlepool.

Flags were flown at half-mast at the Civic Centre when news of his death was received. This was because John also served as a councillor in Hartlepool for 16 years, including one year in the 1990s as the town's Mayor. When he stepped down in 1998, he was given the title of Honorary Alderman to recognise his work for the town.

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his wife Gladys, children Gary and Julie and grandchildren Jennifer, Edward and Grace.

John's funeral took place on 19 July at St Oswald church.

Geoff Burton, Sec, Thornaby branch

Woking Branch Retirements

WOKING Branch recently celebrated (if that's the right word – I guess it is for them!) the retirement of Brian Pickett and Andy Parkes - two long serving members and former Branch Officers and LDC reps. We'd like to offer them both our best wishes in retirement - and thank them for their time spent serving ASLEF and its members at Woking.

Brian Pickett started his railway career as a cleaner at Guildford MPD in 1960 at the ripe old age of 15. He worked his way through the footplate grades and was a 'passed' Fireman by the time steam came to an end on the Southern Region in 1967 and Guildford MPD closed. Brian was then the Senior 'Passed' Fireman and next to be promoted to Driver. He came to Woking with most of the other MPD men.

He spent the next 43 years at

Woking Depot and served two stints as a Local Rep as well as being involved in our Social Committee (which he will continue after retirement). He also held many Woking Branch positions, including Chairman. We hope he'll continue his involvement within the Retired Member's Section – or at least attend our monthly meetings and buy us a pint! He owes us because he's always been a 'wind-up merchant' in the real railway tradition - and most of us have been on the receiving end at one time or another.

Andy Parkes joined Woking Depot as a guard in 1983 and was soon involved in all things Trade Union. He served NUR members for many years as a Local Rep before, in 1993, he 'moved across' to ASLEF when he joined the footplate grades as a Trainman D.



Brian and Andy might be celebrating, but they'll be missed

With his NUR union credentials Andy was well known to his footplate brethren, soon becoming one of the few Trainman D's to be elected to a Rep position. He passed for Driving in 1998.

Since 1993 Andy has been involved in all aspects of ASLEF – from Health & Safety and Local Rep and then Branch Secretary. He was instrumental in Woking & Farnham Depot's survival in spite of formal Closure Notices served

in 1995. He represented the branch at many AADs, assisted our DFC in rewriting SWT's establishment calculator for the Driving Grades in 2000 and has been vocal regarding the removal of asbestos from our messroom – a long-standing battle that was won last year. He is planning to take things easy after retiring early and our loss will be his garden's gain....

Mick Berg, Secretary, Woking Branch

THE Bakerloo Line branch made a number of presentations at its August meeting, marking membership ranging from 10 years to 35 years. The Branch would like to thank Tony West, former Assistant General Secretary, for attending and for making those presentations on the day and for his usual wit and humour. Thanks also to Executive Committee member Terry Wilkinson and District Organiser Steve Grant for their reports and continued support.

The Branch holds regular presentations for membership (and loyalty) and as a result we have found that we are getting more members than ever to attend meetings. We feel branch meetings are a great way to find out what's going on at a local level as well as the senior level and would encourage every other Branch to try and hold similar presentation evenings to encourage members to attend.

Steve Crowley, Secretary, Bakerloo Line branch

Presentations boost Bakerloo Branch



All presentation and correct at Bakerloo as (left to right) Derek Reeves, Terry Burgess, Steve Grant, John McHale, Tony West, Micky Bowling and Terry Wilkinson can testify

On Top Of The World!



Retired Machynlleth Driver Bro Ted Hughes receiving his 50 year badge from Bro Hefin Ellis - at the summit of Ben Nevis in May of this year!

Gareth Price, Machynlleth

Upcoming events

HITHER GREEN - 19 NOVEMBER

The Hither Green branch and Traincrew and Welfare Club are holding a joint retirement and presentation event on Friday 19 November at the Hither Green railway and social club on Beacon Road in Hither Green, London SW13 commencing at 1900 hours. Everyone connected with Hither Green, past or present, is welcome.

MARYLEBONE ASLEF REUNION - 15 OCTOBER

The next reunion will take place on 15 October at the Hobgoblin pub (two minutes walk from the station) from 16.00. Buffet provided and all are welcome.

YORK REUNION - 30 OCTOBER

The annual York R.E.S. traincrew reunion will take place on Saturday 30 October at York Railway Institute bar from 1900 - 2300. All ex-R.E.S. traincrew and any others who wish to meet old workmates are welcome. A light buffet will be laid on as usual. For further details contact Brian Wallace of York branch's RMS.

105 at the Millgate

Another top turn-out from retired drivers, other grades and guests on 14 July - despite the closure of the Oldham/Rochdale branch.

Everyone managed to find alternative transport. Some - from North and South Devon and even Ireland - took up lodgings for the event. We were delighted to have along our four senior retired drivers - whose ages range from 84 to 88 and each of whom has at least 45 year's service.

We enjoyed an excellent buffet and a raffle thanks to the 105 Social Committee, Mike Wood, Doug Oxer and John Pat.

Thanks also to the active staff for their presence and continued contributions to this excellent annual event. S. Black, RMS, Newton Heath



The South Coast moves to the capital: Weymouth and Northam at ASLEF head office

Nice to see you

I am writing this letter on behalf of myself (Carl Wainwright, Branch Secretary, Weymouth) and Bro Alan Lockloughlin (Branch Secretary, Southampton Northam).

We would like to thank the General Secretary, the EC and all the members of staff at head office for their warm welcome and hospitality when our branches visited Arkwright Road on 15 July.

Both branches enjoyed the day - and we look forward to future visits at our new head office.

Carl Wainwright, Secretary, Weymouth branch

To see you, nice!

On behalf of Orpington Train Crew I would like to thank ASLEF's head office staff for their warm welcome and kind hospitality on our enjoyable branch visit.

We were all very amazed at the size of the building and the interior décor and had the pleasure of not only joining Tonbridge depot on the branch visit but also having General Secretary Keith Norman join us for lunch along with several members of the Executive Committee.

We hope to do it again at our new head office!

Edward Brown, LDR

**Don't let it cost
you your job!**





These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 9 Arkwright Road London NW3 6AB** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



Views from Kalgoorlie

BY NOW the successful applicants for train driving jobs here in Australia will be going through the process of visa applications and medicals. Congratulations to them all.

This reminds me to respond to the letter from W.G. Richards (July Journal) regarding education in Australia. My teenage kids are reaching the end of their school life and both cannot praise their education enough. Not only do they have access to school computer suites with at least 30 computers, but laptops are made available to kids unfortunate enough not to own one.

They both rate the education at least equal to the UK, if not better. Also, class sizes are around 20 rather than 30 plus in the UK and because we have school transport, the surrounding streets aren't full of Chelsea tractors.

N. W. Clarke, ex UK driver, Kalgoorlie, W.A.

No diktats, no ideology, no RMT

SO OUR comrades at the RMT are at it again (GS Column, August Journal). How magnanimous of them to decide our industry only needs one union – by which they mean the absorption of ASLEF and TSSA into the RMT.

What did they offer Keith Norman in return? A broom cupboard at Unity House? And perhaps a copy of Karl Marx 'Das Kapital' so he can indoctrinate himself with enough ideology to rid himself of his 'elitist craft union' mindset.

Bob Crowe knows ASLEF is a powerful union and wants to use that power. That's why RMT driver activists consistently target ASLEF members to join their union. They try to exploit local disputes by criticising ASLEF reps, but offer no alternative to the status quo.

Yes, sometimes – like during restructuring negotiations – our own members have criticisms of ASLEF reps. But ask yourself this: 'If the RMT had negotiated driver restructuring and harmonisation in your TOC, what would your salaries and conditions be like now?' Do you honestly think they would be better, negotiated by RMT reps with their hands tied behind their backs by diktats from their

GRATEFUL GRAYRIGG DRIVER

I'D LIKE to thank ASLEF and Thompsons Solicitors for the way they handled my recent compensation claim.

I was the Virgin train driver involved in the 23 February 2007 derailment at Grayrigg. The serious injuries I suffered on that terrible day mean I cannot return to driving duties. I would have loved to drive trains again but I'm afraid I've had to adjust my work and life.

ASLEF and Thompsons dealt with my compensation claim at no cost to myself – and what a great job they did. I have been awarded compensation which will give me financial security should I need to retire if my condition deteriorates, which it may do. Thanks also to my company Virgin Trains for finding me alternative duties which are suited to my current condition.

Special thanks to Colin Smith for the endless work he carried out on my behalf. He was at my bedside just hours after the crash and was at my side for the three years the legal claim took. At

times I thought of giving up but Colin would give me the confidence to carry on.

Thanks to Kevin Lindsay who also appeared at my bedside within hours of the accident and has given me continued support throughout. Also many thanks to Matthew Tollit of Thompsons Liverpool. He dealt with the claim in a very professional manner and I could not have asked for better representation. I was sent to see some of the best consultants in their field and their reports helped give me a solid case for decent compensation. I would also like to thank all the other people involved in helping settle my claim for all their hard work.

I realise that some members may think that a union is just an expensive diary. It's not the case. When I needed ASLEF it was there for me 100 percent – and that's what really matters.

Thank you all.
Iain Black, Polmadie

glorious leader Kim Jong-il Crowe? No agreement would have been reached.

ASLEF negotiators know when management is trying it on, and react appropriately. But they negotiate in a pragmatic and realistic way, seeing the world as it is. We will face the fallout of this government's spending cuts, but remember that when we were attacked by rail privatisation, we reacted by creating the Drivers' Charter. It has served our members well. And what was the RMT equivalent of our Charter? Yes, you've guessed – they don't have one!

It is the central problem with the RMT. They fight political battles they can't win instead of industrial battles they could win. Their socialist dogma hampers progress in improving their members' conditions.

ASLEF isn't going away, and it's not going to be transformed into comrade Bob's 'shock

troops'. We are ASLEF members not because we are elitist, but because we are a drivers' union, represented by members of the driving grade with a priority of improving our members' pay and conditions, not imposing political ideology.

George Hill, Longsight

One rail union

I WELCOME the RMT AGM's resolution calling for all rail workers to be in the same union and I was disappointed by Keith Norman's flippant rejection of it (GS Column, August Journal).

I've heard the argument that other unions' want amalgamation with ASLEF so that they can flex the drivers' industrial muscle on behalf of other grades – but this is a 'top-down' view of how the union operates.

It insults the intelligence and initiative of rank and file union members to suggest they are a stage army to be called up by the leadership when negotiations aren't getting results. It doesn't credit them with any ability to decide for themselves what they want to do. Remember, that in any potential industrial action the members have a vote – and if they don't want to go on strike, they can vote not to.

To achieve one union we need a grass roots campaign involving members from all rail unions. In this way we can put an end to false divisions which enables management to weaken and defeat us.

Tony Byrne, dual ASLEF and RMT member, Nottingham

○ We had a single rail workers' union many years ago. I would encourage Brother Byrne to read a book entitled 'Engines and Men' which explains how and why ASLEF was borne. After reading it I'm sure Bro Byrne will better understand why ASLEF is, and will remain, a craft union for as long as train drivers want it to. Keith Norman, GS

Fratton thanks

I'D LIKE to thank Fratton Drivers LDC for their efforts in securing a successful outcome to a problem over my leave and pay arrears. At one stage I thought it would never be resolved – and wouldn't have been without their diligence and efforts. I won't forget it.

You often hear quite hurtful criticism of the LDC, but it's not my view. Belonging to a first-class union and having a top quality LDC is a benefit that train crew should remember.

Once again – many thanks.

Gary White, Driver, Fratton Depot

Pride in Polmadie

I'D LIKE to express my sincere gratitude to ASLEF and in particular to the Scottish Organiser, Kevin Lindsay and Laura Connor of Thompsons for their greatly appreciated support - Kevin for negotiating my redeployment after my accident and Laura for bringing my CICA case to a satisfactory conclusion.

Jim Ross, Polmadie Branch

Plenty of ASLEF activity

FEW people seem to be aware of the various meetings and conferences that ASLEF members are entitled to attend each year.

In May or June ASLEF holds its Annual Assembly of Delegates (AAD), which is in essence the union's parliament. For that week the members make decisions which affect the whole union. Branches elect delegates to attend, and the successful candidates discuss motions which have been submitted to the conference agenda by other branches.

The TUC holds conferences for the minority groups in addition to its main conference. ASLEF is entitled to send up to five delegates to each conference, two of whom are the Chair and Secretary of the relevant representative committee. One place is reserved for ASLEF members sitting on the TUC Committee and the other two places are open to members of the two districts which are attending that year. This works on a rotational basis, so each district is eligible to attend once every four

years.

Over recent years members of the representative committees for that year's rotation have been attending, because lay members have shown little interest. This may be because members

- are not aware of the conferences
- feel that it is only open to the relevant committee members
- feel overawed about speaking at a conference
- don't attend their own branch meetings.

If you think you might like to attend a conference but feel a bit intimidated, why not go along as a visitor to find out what goes on? It's a chance for you to meet members of your own and other unions - and who knows? You could be your district or branch's next delegate.

Delegates are nominated at branch level, so if you are interested in attending a conference as an ASLEF representative, your branch must be made aware of your intention to stand.

Deborah Reay, WRC Chair

Thanks to Farnham folk

I WONDER if I could use the Journal to pass on my thanks to ASLEF's Farnham branch for their generous contribution to Freight on Rail? I am delighted that you chose to donate the money to this campaign to help your freight colleagues. It really does demonstrate the power and fraternity of the union. Our campaign against 'mega trucks' is the most crucial so the money will go into this pot. My sincere thanks.

Philippa Edmunds, Manager, Freight on Rail

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

To advertise in the ASLEF Journal please contact Sarah Francis on 020 7317 8600 or sfrancis@aslef.org.uk



FAVERSHAM BRANCH (077) has finally launched its 25th Anniversary ASLEF/NUM badge. They cost £10 each including P&P. A few Faversham Branch Centenary badges remain

available at £5 each including P&P. To order please contact the Branch Secretary, Steve Gurdler, 18 Hunters Way West, Chatham, Kent ME5 7HL. steve.gurdler@aslefonline.co.uk or 07941 110473

ASLEF TRAIN DRIVER collects ASLEF/railway badges, signs, shed plates, signalling items, etc. Phone Mark on 01562 746537 or (mobile) 07789301551



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CITY OF LONDON BADGES, one 10-year and one depot badge. Depot badges are numbered 1-150. There are only 150 of each. Price £5 plus £1 p&p. All profits to City of London branch funds to acquire a branch banner.

Further information or orders to Colin Dawson 01689 849 543 or 22 Hutchison Road, New Addington, Croydon, Surrey CR0 0BD.

DRIVER COLLECTS BR33056 SERIES TRAINCREW / DRIVER MANUALS. Contact Lee on 07919127972 or e-mail lippydavies@blueyonder.co.uk



NXEA 2009 STRIKE BADGE commemorating solidarity of ASLEF members. Purchase (£3 plus p&p) from NXEA Branch Secretary or District Council 5 Secretary. Contact M Steele on 07788 153954, 1 Rosecroft, South Wootton, Kings Lynn Norfolk PE30 3WX. Proceeds to District Council 5 Education Fund and ASLEF Fighting Fund.



BRIGHTON ASLEF DRIVERS BADGE. Limited Edition of 300. All profits to fund branch reunions. Available for £10 including p&p (cheques made payable to 'ASLEF Brighton Branch No 35') from Mark Johnson, 51 Drove Road, Portslade, Brighton BN41 2PA or phone 07783 847228.

Brief encounters on the platform

Alf Martin looks at some of the novel, quirky and useful purposes to which stations have been put to use ...

WHEN the steady trickle of railway closures increased in the 1950's into a torrent in the 1960's with Dr Richard Beeching's 'rationalisation' of the railways, our members - and the British public - were in uproar.

The government rejected the 'Beeching Axe' report and he resigned in 1965. Although he was gone, the programme of closures begun under the Conservatives continued unabated under Labour until it was brought to a halt in the early 1970's.

Gradually the memory of these lost lines and stations began to fade as sites started to be redeveloped.

So what happened to them?

Some transformed into attractive country dwellings, station houses, railway cottages and new uses for railway tracks. Specialist property companies began selling these unique sites, like www.property.org.uk/unique/rail.html.

CAMERAS AT CARNFORTH

But one of the first to continue its main business as a working railway station with an added attraction was Carnforth Railway Station. It was originally opened in 1846 by the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway Company as a single platform station. In 1880 a new station was constructed at a cost of £40,000 and in 1937 it was completely rebuilt by the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company, financed by over £53,000 of government-funded money.

During the two world wars thousands of servicemen passed through Carnforth Station on route to duty overseas.

In 1945 David Lean filmed his romantic classic 'Brief Encounter' here. The Ministry of War Transport chose Carnforth as it was remote and safe from attack. Filming had to take place at night between 10pm and 6am so as not to interfere with daytime train



The concourse at Eastbourne as it looked in 1907 – now it houses an NHS Health Centre

timetables.

Carnforth's mainline platforms were closed in 1970 prior to electrification and were reduced to a branch line and the building gradually fell into disrepair. In 1966 the Carnforth Station and Railway Trust Co Ltd started a £1.5 million restoration process and the Brief Encounter Refreshment Room and Visitor Centre opened in October 2003.

The Refreshment Room has been faithfully restored to its 1940s period glory while the free Visitor Centre has lots of interesting railway memorabilia. Check out your own Brief Encounter at www.carnforthstation.co.uk or www.refreshmentroom.com.

READY FOR THE SLEEPERS

If you really want to experience the golden age of rail, you could spend the night in an original Pullman carriage at The Old Railway Station in Petworth, West Sussex. Originally conceived as a 'Palaces on Wheels' by George Pullman, each carriage is an original 1920s and 30s masterpiece. The four carriages cost around £130,000 to convert into bedrooms. Great care was taken to preserve the original features but there are a few modern additions like central heating and flat screen TVs. You can see this at www.theoldrailwaystation.co.uk.

CULTURE AT EDGE HILL

Top prize for innovative and quirky use goes to the world's oldest standing passenger railway station - Edge Hill in Liverpool. The Engine House, Boiler Room and Accumulator Tower have been transformed into arts, culture, heritage and community areas that work with artists, local groups, schools, businesses and individuals.

The first exhibition at the newly renovated station was called 'XXX Get Off At Edge Hill'. Taking the well-known Scouse phrase as its title, the exhibition explored themes of industrialisation, the sexual metaphor and the Scouse dialect.

The current exhibition – 15 September to 23 October – is called 'Dream Machine' and celebrates the 180th anniversary of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway – the first inter-city passenger line. It's free and open Tues- Fri 2-6pm, Sat 12-4pm.

IF YOU'RE STATIONARY

Meanwhile, if you're in Eastbourne and feeling under the weather, Eastbourne Station NHS



All change as Edge Hill launches its first arts project in the old station: Photo: Martin Baxter



Everything in Carnforth's refreshment room is from the 1940's – bar the food!



Carnforth station's visitor centre is a treasury of rail memorabilia

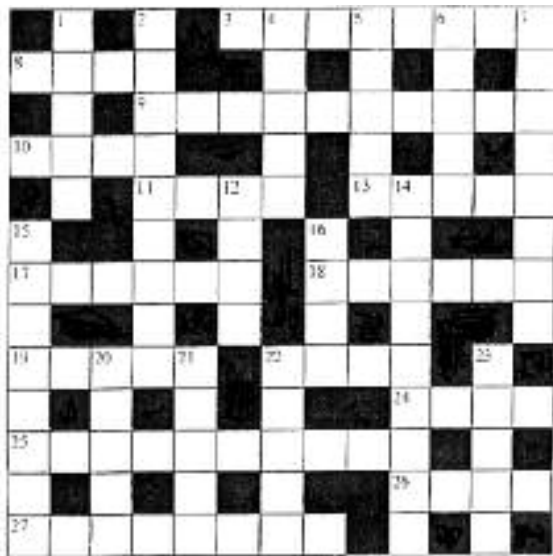


The Pullman carriages you can hire on a bed-and-breakfast basis at Petworth

Health Centre offers residents or visitors the chance to see a GP or nurse from eight in the morning until eight at night. Opened in 1866, it suffered a set back when the 'Cuckoo Line' from Polegate to Eridge fell to Beeching cuts in June 1965, but continues today as a Southern route.

🟡 Do you know of any other uses that stations have been put? If so, drop a line to the Editor of the Journal or email journal@aslef.org.uk and we'll include it in a future edition.

Prize Crossword No. 54 set by TLC



CLUES ACROSS

- 3 Transport system for passengers and freight (8)
 8 — Spumante, wine (4)
 9 Affluent area of inner city London (10)
 10 Fuel (4)
 11 Abbreviated holidays (5)
 13 Rising or falling sharply (5)
 17 Plants, trees, animals etc. (6)
 18 One who looks after forestry etc. (6)
 19 External region (5)
 22 The first man? (4)
 24 Small needle case (4)
 25 Royal Borough (10)
 26 Outer covering for a wheel

- (4)
 27 Occurring not long ago (8)

CLUES DOWN

- 1 Famous racecourse (5)
 2 Area in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (9)
 4 Pit (5)
 5 Yorkshire city (5)
 6 Without a companion (5)
 7 Found on the railway track (8)
 12 Told untruths (4)
 14 High rise flats (9)
 15 They are said to see most of the game (8)
 16 — McMurray, Hollywood actor (4)

- 20 Pick-me-up (5)
 21 Rule (5)
 22 Spiritual being (5)
 23 In charge of the train (5)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Solution to Crossword No 53 which appeared in the September edition of the ASLEF Journal.

Congratulations to **John Anderson** from **Tyne and Wear**

ACROSS 1 Saint Pancras 7 Conga 8 Dormant 11 Theatre 12 Tsarina 13 Oasis 14 Middleman 16 Westerner 19 Mop up 21 Greaser 23 Gallant 24 Nest Egg 25 Basin 26 Sound Sleeper **DOWN** 1 Sachets 2 Ignites 3 Tradesman 4 Audit 5 Curtail 6 Station Wagon 9 Axiom 10 Train Spotter 15 Dirigible 17 Sheds 18 Eastern 19 Milk Sop 20 Planner 22 Rages

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 53rd ASLEF crossword in the September edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 9 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6AB by the 14th of the issue month.

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EMERGENCIES If you are an ASLEF member who is arrested or being interviewed by the police and need legal assistance – day or night – you can call the members' Emergency Hotline on 0800 587 7530.

SACKINGS OR OTHER PROBLEMS AT WORK Harassment, discrimination or bullying? If your local, branch or district representative is unavailable, call the Industrial Relations department at union headquarters (020 7317 8600) or email info@aslef.org.uk

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Injuries can cost a lot more than accident victims initially realise.

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The emotional costs can be just as heavy in their own way too.

Ruth Hart (above) suffered excruciating pain after accidental knee damage.

Says Ruth: *"I have never fully recovered. I became very angry about what had happened to me.*

So I contacted a firm of solicitors I had seen advertising about personal injury claims on TV. At first, they advised me that I might get £5,000. But later said they didn't think I had a case"

Then Ruth was introduced to Thompsons Solicitors.

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